



Ucare

The Caregiver Guide

Module 12

Assistive Technology

Leader Guide

Module 12

Assistive Technology

PURPOSE

Module 12 will assist caregivers in understanding assistive technology (AT) and how it can help your family member with daily living activities. The module discusses how to obtain AT and the financial support for purchasing it.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this module participants will be able to:

1. Identify different types of AT devices.
2. Describe how AT can help your family member with tasks of daily living to encourage their independence.
3. Determine what types of AT will be most useful.
4. Describe where and how to obtain AT devices.
5. Identify how to obtain financial support for AT.

SLIDE 1

UCare: The Caregiver Guide Assistive Technology

INTRODUCE

Introduce yourself and allow everyone present to introduce themselves and explain their role.

NOTE

Introductions are an excellent time to set the tone of the training. Be relaxed and focused. Remember names.

TELL

The handouts are yours to take home. There is room to write on the handouts during training.

ASK

What would you like to get out of the training today?

NOTE

Put responses on a white board and during the training refer back to them and put a check by specific topics discussed.

Offer to meet with participants after the workshop to discuss information needs that cannot be covered in this workshop and to discuss where and how to obtain appropriate information.

Any personally identifiable information discussed in the group must be kept confidential. Please try not to use the name of the person that you are the caregiver for.

SLIDE 2

After completing this module the participant will be able to:

- Identify different types of AT devices
- Describe how AT can help your family member with tasks of daily living to encourage their independence
- Determine what types of AT will be most useful
- Describe where and how to find AT devices
- Identify how to obtain financial support for AT

NOTE

Read the objectives from the slide.

ASK

What do you think Assistive Technology means?

TELL

Let's look at some examples. Mrs. Smith is trying to make spaghetti for dinner. She bought a jar of spaghetti sauce with meatballs so that she can simply heat up the sauce and put it on the spaghetti. However, the jar lid is too tight to open.

ASK

What would you do if you had a jar with a tight-fitting lid and couldn't get it open?

TELL

You either ask for help or you use "something" to open the jar. The "something" to open the jar is what we call an assistive device or assistive technology. It could be a wet cloth, rubber

gripper, electronic jar opener, or rubber glove. Each of these would be considered an assistive device.

SLIDE 3

An AT device is any item or piece of equipment that is used to **increase, maintain or improve** functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. AT is used to improve quality of life and increase independence.

TELL

Read from Slide 3.

ASK

What are some other examples of AT that we use?

NOTE

Put examples on white board.

SLIDE 4

What are the different types of AT?

Low-Technology devices include:

- Specially designed jar opener
- Stick with a hook
- Plastic guide for writing checks

TELL

Please look at page 2 in your Participant Booklet. Low-technology devices have simple operations with no electronic or electrical support. These may be found at hardware or variety stores. For example, you may use a rubber glove to open a tight-

fitting jar lid. They may also include devices that are specially designed to perform a specific function, such as a jar opener.

SLIDE 5

What are the different types of AT?

High Technology devices include:

- Power scooters
- Computers
- Remote controls
- Personal emergency response systems

TELL

Please look at page 3 in your Participant Booklet. High-technology devices have complex operations with electronic or electrical support. A joystick for a computer could be considered a high-technology device.

ASK

What kind of AT device(s) is your family member currently using?

ACTIVITY 1

Please look at “Activity 1 – Classification of technology” on page 4 of your Participant Booklet. There are ten pictures in the handout. Take 3 minutes and write low technology or high technology by each picture on your activity sheet.

Activity 1 – Classification of technology



Low-technology



Low-technology



High-technology



Low-technology



High-technology



Low-technology



Low-technology



Low-technology



High-technology



High-technology

SLIDE 6

AT can help your family member with tasks of daily living to encourage their independence.

ASK

What are the tasks that you need to do from the time you wake until you are ready for the day?

ACTIVITY 2

Take 3 minutes and make a list of what you do from the time you wake up until you are ready for the day? Write on the sheet provided in your participant booklet. Please look at “Activity 2 – List of daily tasks” on page 5 of your Participant Booklet.

NOTE

If needed, prompt participants with examples such as:

- Turn off alarm;
- Get out of bed;
- Go to the bathroom;
- Get in shower and wash, etc. or
- Take medications

Have a white board or flip chart and markers available.

Activity 2 – List of daily tasks

| Time | Activities |
|------|------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

ACTIVITY 3

From the lists you've made, on page 6 make a list of daily living activities that your family member is unable to do by him or herself. These could be tasks such as eating, drinking, dressing, bathing, or walking. Please look at "Activity 3 – Help Needed for Activities of Daily Living" on page 6 of your Participant Booklet.

Activity 3 – Help Needed for Activities of Daily Living

| |
|----|
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| 6. |
| 7. |
| 8. |

TELL

Let's look at some low technology AT devices that may be able to help with the tasks or you've listed.

NOTE

- If the AT Demonstration Kit is available, as you discuss the various assistive technology devices be sure to show them to the group. If the kit is unavailable, pictures are included in the Participant Booklet beginning on page 7.
- PowerPoint slides have pictures.

SLIDE 7

Examples of AT for eating and drinking include:

- Super grip bendable weighted utensils
- Eating utensils with large plastic handles
- Scooper bowls or food guards
- Two handled mugs
- Flow lids
- Weighted cups
- Cutout cups

TELL

Super grip bendable weighted utensils are good for people who have a weak grasp and can't fully bend or turn their wrist to get the spoon to their mouth.

Eating utensils with large plastic handles are helpful for individuals with a weak grasp or when grasping is painful.

A scooper bowl and food guard are other examples of eating aids.

There are wide assortments of cups with two handles, flow lid, weighted cup, and cutout cups and straws which will enable a person to be independent when drinking liquids.

SLIDE 8

Examples of AT for toileting and bathing include:

- Toilet frames
- Toilet seat with armrests
- Long-handled bath sponge
- Hand held showers
- Push button soap dispensers

TELL

There are devices that will enable individuals to maintain their personal bathroom needs. There are various pieces of equipment that provide support for getting up and down to use the toilet. Long-handled bath sponges allow individuals to reach their backs and toes. Hand held showers permit an individual who needs to sit and rinse with ease. Liquid soap dispensers allow easy access to soap, shampoo, and conditioner without having to open small lids and bottles. Pictures are provided on page 8 of your Participant Booklet.

SLIDE 9

Examples of AT for dressing include:

- Sock and shoe aids
- Dressing stick
- Velcro® closures

TELL

Aids that help an individual put on or take off clothing can be simple but require some planning. Clothing with large neck openings are easy to slip on and off. Pants that have elastic waists are handy. Buttons or zippers can be replaced with Velcro®. Devices such as a dressing stick or sock and shoe aids can be obtained through a catalog. Pictures and examples are provided on page 9 of your Participant Booklet.

Slides 7 through 10 were examples of low technology. Now let's discuss some high technology devices to help with in-home support.

SLIDE 10

Examples of high technology AT devices include:

- Medication reminders and pill dispensers
- Personal emergency response systems (PERS)

TELL

Medications

Remembering to give medications or reminding your family member to take medications is an important task in caregiving. There are devices that can remind the caregiver or the individual it is time to take the medication. One solution may be a medication dispenser device with an electronic alarm. In addition, there are response centers which can be hired to call and remind an individual to take medications.

Personal Emergency Response Systems

Sometimes a person can be alone for part of the day, but you are concerned about what would happen if there is an emergency.

Personal emergency response systems (PERS) provide ongoing access to a signal response center that is staffed 24-hours per day, seven days a week by trained professionals responsible for getting help to a person in case of emergency. PERS enables individuals who live in their own homes to call for assistance in an emergency. PERS includes an electronic signaling device in the person's home and the 24-hour response center service. A signaling device may be attached to the person to go off automatically if, for example, the person falls or becomes unconscious. The response center then executes one or more actions to give assistance that have been agreed upon by you and your family member.

ASK

Do you know of anyone who has used a medication reminder, personal emergency response system, or other similar device? What has worked well? What are your concerns?

TELL

There are many kinds of helpful devices that can make your caregiving easier and help the person feel more independent. But where do you find out about them? We've seen so far that there are many kinds of "gadgets" that can be useful to help people perform daily activities, but what are those that are most needed by you and your family member?

ASK

Please look at your list on page 6 of your Participant Booklet. Now that you've seen some examples of assistive technology, can you think of other things you would add to your list? Are there other things you would like help with?

SLIDE 11

Review and add to your list:

“Help Needed for Activities of Daily Living.”

TELL

Let's talk about where you can get information about the kinds of AT devices that might be useful, and where you can purchase the AT device.

SLIDE 12

Sources of information about obtaining AT devices include:

- Talk to others with similar concerns
- Visit AT demonstration centers
- Access Utah Network 1-800-333-8824 or visit www.accessut.org
- Do Internet Search (See Resources and Tips in the Participant Booklet)

TELL

For some tasks on your list you can figure out an AT device on your own. Examples would be: electric toothbrush, handheld shower, and non-spill mugs. You can find these items at a variety store or superstore. If it is unclear what AT device may help, then another option is to go to a hardware store and ask the hardware attendant how to solve a specific problem.

For more complicated problems that may require higher technology solutions, you may need to have assistance from a knowledgeable source. There are eleven AT demonstration centers located in Utah. These centers have various kinds of devices and equipments for viewing and trying out. A list of

these demonstration centers is in your Participant Booklet on pages 19. AT demonstration centers will have catalogs and will know of vendors that sell AT devices.

Access Utah Network

Access Utah Network is a toll-free information and referral service for many types of disability-related information. Access Utah Network maintains a listing of used assistive technology equipment (www.accessut.org). Individuals who no longer need items list them for sale or donation, and prospective buyers can browse the list on the website. Items are priced by the individual owner. Access Utah Network connects interested sellers with interested buyers and is not involved in the exchange. If you don't have access to the Internet, you may call Access Utah Network toll free at 1-800-333-8824.

Internet

For Internet search tips, see the page "Tips on finding AT through the Internet" On page 23 of your Participant Booklet.

SLIDE 13

Suggestions of retail vendors of AT include:

- Medical supply vendors/catalogs
- Local hardware or variety stores
- Large "big box" stores (such as WalMart)
- Electronic stores (such as Radio Shack)

TELL

Some AT devices can be bought "off the shelf" at medical supply stores or catalogs. Items such as reachers, grabbers, bath seats

or walkers may be found at medical supply stores. For the “do it yourself types” a hardware store will have items such as bars for installation near bathtubs and toilets or adapted lever door handles. Variety stores will have items such as rubber anti-skid mats, adapted pencil grips, box openers or a magnifying glass with a light. There are various retail outlets that sell AT devices. Electronic stores such as Radio Shack will have pill boxes with alarm clocks, universal remote controls, switches and other environmental control devices.

A listing of popular AT devices with suggested vendors and price ranges is in your Participant Booklet on page 18.

ASK

If you needed assessment and consultation from an expert, where would you go for professional advice and information?

SLIDE 14

Getting professional help in choosing AT include:

- AT specialist
- Occupational therapist
- Rehabilitation engineer
- Physician
- Hospital education center staff
- Senior center or Area Agency on Aging staff

TELL

AT specialist

Depending on your need, you could obtain information from various places. An Assistive Technology (AT) specialist has special training to help a person with disability figure out what

type of AT device might be effective. Assistive Technology Specialists are available at most of the eleven AT demonstration centers in Utah. You can make an appointment with an AT specialist to discuss the type of device or system that might be useful for your family member. The AT specialist can recommend solutions that have worked for individuals with similar issues or functional needs.

Occupational therapist

An occupational therapist (OT) is a licensed health professional that is trained to offer solutions to daily living activities for people with limited functioning due to illness or disability. Occupational therapists understand human physiology and movement. They are skilled in helping people learn to perform essential tasks. Their training helps people prevent injury and promote healthy functioning.

Rehabilitation engineer

A rehabilitation engineer is more highly trained than an AT Specialist and uses science and engineering principles to meet the needs and address barriers confronted by individuals with disabilities. A rehabilitation engineer is trained in building and customizing devices for individuals and their particular environment. Examples of rehabilitation engineering projects are: building a laser head-pointer, customizing a wheelchair seat and building a remote control one-touch switch for operating electrical appliances.

Physician

A physician may be needed to prescribe an AT device such as a wheelchair, scooter or other “durable medical equipment.” A person’s health insurance plan may pay for an AT device if a

physician writes a justification for why it is “medically necessary.” Medicaid, Medicare and private health insurance are possible funding sources for durable medical equipment that is medically necessary, if the person is eligible for these health plans.

Other

Hospital education centers may provide information about obtaining AT. Your local Area Agency on Aging is another helpful resource with staff that is knowledgeable about AT.

All of these professionals will assess the functional needs of the individual and then may recommend one or more devices for the person.

ASK

Have you or your family member used the services of any of these professionals for help in getting AT? Discuss answers as a group.

SLIDE 15

AT services include:

- Finding the right device
- Learning how to use the device
- Making adjustments
- Doing repairs and maintenance

TELL

With some AT you will need help in learning how to use it. Or certain devices may need to be customized or adjusted to your

specifications for maximum usefulness. Some kinds of AT devices require ongoing service for the device to function.

The first place to ask for AT services is the vendor that sells the item, for example, a wheelchair or equipment vendor. Be careful when purchasing a complex piece of equipment that you can obtain service support from the vendor. Buy from a vendor that has a good reputation. AT specialists at your local AT Demonstration Centers may be able to recommend reliable vendors. Also, AT specialists may be able to help with training or customizing devices, or recommend where you can get help.

Some examples of AT services include:

- assisting a consumer to evaluate communication devices
- installing environmental controls in a home
- training in learning to use AT software.

When you make adjustments to AT devices, it is important to remember not to injure the individual by making adjustments.

Look at the list of AT resources in the back of the Participant Booklet for local demonstrations centers and vendors.

SLIDE 16

Financial support for buying AT:

- Service agencies
- Independent Living Centers
- Utah Assistive Technology Foundation/Zion's Bank (loans)

You may be worried about your ability to afford the cost of AT devices and services. There are sources of financial support to obtain AT depending on your needs and financial situation.

Service agencies

The Resource section of the Participant Booklet has a list of service agencies that will provide AT devices and services for eligible clients. Each agency makes a determination of who is eligible to receive financial support for AT from their agency.

Independent Living Centers

A good place to start to look for financial help is an Independent Living (IL) center. Call the IL center closest to you and tell them you need information about assistive technology. The phone numbers are listed in the Resource section on page 20 of your Participant Booklet. Talk to the AT representative and describe what your family member needs, for example, “I have a 72 year old father who needs a wheelchair.” The IL center representative will assess your situation and send you an application package to apply for funds, or refer you to an appropriate agency for help with AT funding. If needed they will help you search for funds that could be used to purchase AT for your family member.

Utah Assistive Technology Foundation/Zion’s Bank (loans)

In addition to service agencies and Independent Living Centers, another source of funding is low interest loans to purchase AT. Zions Bank, through the Utah Assistive Technology Foundation, offers low-interest loans to residents of Utah who can qualify. This arrangement permits purchasers to obtain more expensive

AT devices, such as van lifts or scooters, on time-payments without having to pay expensive interest on a loan. The loans are structured so you can make monthly loan payments to Zions Bank. The loan interest is paid by the Utah Assistive Technology Foundation, a non-profit charitable group. This arrangement allows a person who could not afford to buy out right piece of assistive technology to make smaller payments over time.

ASK

Do you have any further questions about the resources in this module?

SLIDE 17

Assistive technology (AT):

- Useful tools and resources to help your family member be more independent in daily living activities

REVIEW

Remember, assistive technology provides useful tools to help your family member be more independent in daily living activities. Besides giving them more dignity, it may allow you extra time off from caregiving that you can use for yourself or others. We have talked about when and how to find AT devices, and how to obtain financial support for AT.

SLIDE 18

Take a Break.

NOTE

Leader should have chosen one of the ‘Take a Break’ exercises from the Leader’s Toolkit.

TELL

We have one activity remaining. An important part of caregiving that is often forgotten is YOU, the caregiver. You need to take care of yourself.

Ask participants:

- What do you do for you?
- Discuss the answer to this question briefly

ACTIVITY 4

- Lead the participants in the ‘Take a Break’ exercise you have chosen.
- Impress on the participants that it is important for them to do something for themselves each day. Ensure they understand the “Take a Break” card. Review with them several times and ask questions to ensure understanding.

SUMMARY

Remember that you have courage, strength, compassion, power and wisdom. Thank you for your participation. You’ve been a great audience. Please complete the Feedback Sheet. I welcome your comments and appreciate your interest. I wish you the best in your efforts to care for your family member. If you have additional questions or concerns, I would be happy to talk with you following this presentation.